

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1123

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 18063

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH INTERIOR MINISTER MICHEL
PONIATOWSKI

1. SUMMARY: DURING A COURTESY CALL ON INTERIOR MINISTER MICHEL PONIATOWSKI ON JULY 23, WE DISCUSSED NARCOTICS, CRIME IN FRANCE AND GISCARD D'ESTAING'S FIRST 100 DAYS. THE MINISTER WAS FRIENDLY AND CANDID. ALTHOUGH SOFT-SPOKEN AND COURTEOUS, HE GIVES THE IMPRESSION OF INTELLECTUAL STRENGTH, FORCEFULNESS AND SELF-ASSURANCE. HE SAID THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S IMMEDIATE GOALS ARE: (A) TO FORGE A SOLID "GISCARDIAN" MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT, (B) TO BRING INFLATION UNDER CONTROL WITHOUT STIFLING ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND (C) TO SATISFY A WIDESPREAD DESIRE, PARTICULARLY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, FOR A MORE JUST AND OPEN SOCIETY. END SUMMARY.

2. NARCOTICS: THE MINISTER RESPONDED TO MY EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE FOR FRENCH COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS BY SAYING THAT ONE OF HIS FIRST ACTS UPON ASSUMING OFFICE WAS TO INSTRUCT THE NARCOTICS BUREAU TO REINFORCE COOPERATION WITH THE U.S.

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HE AGREED WITH MY COMMENT THAT THE DRUG PROBLEM

MAY BECOME MORE ACUTE BECAUSE OF TURKEY'S DECISION ON POPPIES, BUT SAID FRANCE WAS IN A GOOD POSITION TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEM. THE DRUG LABORATORIES IN MARSEILLE HAVE NOT BEEN REESTABLISHED AND THE MAIN PROBLEM TODAY COMES FROM TRANSIENTS CARRYING HASHISH AND OTHER MILD NARCOTICS ON THEIR WAY TO HOLLAND AND ELSEWHERE. HE SAID THAT ARRESTS AT FRENCH BORDERS HAVE INCREASED TREMENDOUSLY WITH THE TOURIST SEASON. WE AGREED TO WORK CLOSELY ON NARCOTICS MATTERS.

3. CRIME IN FRANCE: THE MINISTER SAID THAT INCIDENCE OF MUGGING, PICKPOCKETING AND EVEN MAJOR CRIME INCREASED DRAMATICALLY IN FRANCE DURING THE PAST 15 YEARS. UNFORTUNATELY, HE ADDED, MUCH OF THIS CRIME CAN BE TRACED TO NORTH AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS, WHICH ADDS A SENSITIVE RACIAL ASPECT TO THE PROBLEM. ONE OF HIS PRIMARY GOALS IS TO REDUCE THE CRIME RATE AND HE IS PREPARED TO TAKE TOUGH MEASURES IF NECESSARY. HE SAID HE WOULD HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF A GREAT MAJORITY OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE IN CRACKING DOWN ON CRIME.

4. GISCARD'S FIRST 100 DAYS: PONIATOWSKI SAID HE BELIEVES GISCARD HAS GOTTEN OFF TO A GOOD START. HE THINKS THE GOVERNMENT CAN NOW COUNT ON THE SUPPORT OF ALL UDR DEPUTIES IN THE ASSEMBLY WITH THE EXCEPTION OF PERHAPS 20 OR 25 IRREDUCIBLE GAULLISTS. HE WAS FRANK IN SAYING THAT HE HOPES TO FORGE A GISCARDIAN MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 18063

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HE SAID THERE MIGHT BE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN 18 MONTHS OR TWO YEARS. THE MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED THE SEVERITY OF ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, BUT EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE MEASURES SO FAR ADOPTED AND OTHERS TO COME WOULD SUCCESSFULLY COUNTER INFLATION WITHOUT STIFLING GROWTH. PERHAPS THE MAJOR CHALLENGE, HE CONTINUED, IS TO TRANSFORM FRENCH SOCIETY SO THAT IT WILL HAVE A MODERN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE? MEASURES TO MOVE FRANCE IN THIS DIRECTION WILL BE FORTHCOMING SHORTLY. IF A SOUND ECONOMY AND SOCIAL REFORM CAN BE ACHIEVED, PONIATOWSKI CONCLUDED, THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS.

5. IN CONCLUDING, I TOLD PONIATOWSKI THE U.S. IS GRATEFUL FOR THE NEW SPIRIT OF COOPERATION WHICH APPEARS TO BE EMERGING IN OUR RELATIONS SINCE GISCARD'S ELECTION BECAUSE IT GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS IN AN INTELLIGENT AND FRIENDLY WAY DIFFERENCES ON VARIOUS ISSUES, I EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT WE COULD CONTINUE TO WORK TOGETHER IN THIS WAY, PONIATOWSKI REPLIED THAT HE AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE EVERY INTENTION OF MAINTAINING A CLOSE, FRIENDLY DIALOGUE WITH U.S. OFFICIALS.

IRWIN

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